THE
SPARKS
BROTHERS
A FILM BY EDGAR WRIGHT

Welcome to the Mysterious and Unique World of "Sparks"

Edgar Wright's first music documentary explores the legendary Sparks, a band that no one can imitate.

"Sparks will always be a mystery to me."

So said Edgar Wright, who took on the challenge of his first documentary film with this one. Since his debut feature film, the zombie comedy "Shaun of the Dead" (2004), Wright has been a genius in the British film world who has thrilled movie fans with his core love of film and innovative visual expression in different genres, such as "Baby Driver" (17) and "Last Night in Soho" (21).

He spent two years closely following the art pop duo Sparks, whom he has been a huge fan of for many years, conducting extensive interviews with them and accompanying them on their world tour. He compiled testimonies from a total of 80 people involved, artists who influenced them, and fans, and used a huge amount of footage and animation to create a feature-length documentary film that could be called the ultimate Sparks chronicle.

Sparks is a band that has maintained a unique presence for nearly 50 years. Since their debut in the 1970s. The younger brother, Russell, has a handsome appearance and flamboyant demeanor, while the older brother, Ron, plays the keyboards with an eccentric mustache reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin
and a unique facial expression.

Both Ron and Russell were born in California - Ron in Culver City in 1945, and Russell in Pacific Palisades in 1948 - and raised by artistic parents surrounded by American rock and roll, British pop bands, New Wave films, surrealism and satirical humor.

The impact and achievements of Sparks on the world are discussed by such illustrious artists as Beck, Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers), Alex Kapranos (Franz Ferdinand), Todd Rundgren, Duran Duran, New
Order, Bjork, Giorgio Moroder, and Mike Myers. The film talks in detail about Sparks ' amazing originality and forward-thinking, and their love for them, even though they are by no means major internationally .

This film follows the band's history from their early childhood, through their rise in the 70s with "Kimono My House" and "No.1 in Heaven", through their decline in the late 80s and early 90s, to their return to the forefront of the scene and their continued presence today. Episodes also include failed projects with famous film directors such as Jacques Tati and Tim Burton, and their collaboration with French director Leos Carax on "Annette" (21). With Edgar Wright's unique fast- paced editing and animation and typography, the film takes a closer look at the unknown face of this legendary band known only to those in the know.

The Sparks Brothers have been unconcerned about being different from others and not being understood by the world, and have stuck to their own music and way of life for over half a century without being swayed by trends, reaching a solitary state that no one can imitate. After watching this movie, you will surely become a fan of them.

Interview with Ron and Russell Mael

★This is Sparks' first documentary film. How did the production begin? Did you discover anything new while watching the film?

Russell: Edgar Wright told me, "Even though they're so popular, no one's made a documentary about Sparks! It's my mission to make one!" (laughs) His filmmaking sensibility is similar to our music-making sensibility, so we were on the same wavelength. Edgar also said, "I want to film Sparks now, because they're still making great music, just like they always did."

Ron: In a sense, we've only ever worked within our own world, so there were a lot of things we didn't know. We were happy because we didn't realize that we had fans not only among musicians, but also among actors and comedians.

★Director Edgar Wright appears in the film under the title of "fan." Please tell us if there were any times when you felt his passion.

Russell: Edgar has been interested in us ever since he discovered us in 1979. "Lots of artists have one hit and then disappear. But we have a hit, then disappear, come back, then disappear again, then come back again. And each time, we gain new fans and move forward regardless of success or failure. There's no other pop group like that," Edgar said, and it was nice to hear that from a fan.

Ron: This is Edgar's first documentary. Despite being a big-name filmmaker, he spent three years on this film, which is a testament to his dedication. We wanted it to be his film, even though it was a documentary about Sparks. We were pleased to see that it was.

★The video also includes scenes from Japan, such as your 2018 Japan tour and a stroll around Shibamata. What are your memories of that time?

Russell: I happened to bump into a fan buying a Sparks CD when I stopped by a record shop in Shibuya. In fact, filming for this movie began in Japan. For the Shibuya live performance scenes, Edgar himself was holding the camera and filming in the pit between the stage and the audience. I thought “I wish he'd move,” but I couldn't bring myself to say it (laughs). Outside of the performances, we suggested some of our favorite places in Japan and filmed there.

Ron: Edgar was amazed at our love for Japan. We went to Shibamata because we love "Tora-san." Not many people in America know about "Otoko wa Tsurai yo," and the same goes for the UK. But as big fans, we had to make the pilgrimage (laughs).

★This film has already been released in various parts of the world, but please tell us any memorable thoughts or reactions you have had.

Russell: For many audience members, this was their first encounter with Sparks. I wondered if we were still unknown, despite having released 25 albums (as of the film's release overseas in 2021) (laughs), but some of the younger fans were happy to be able to listen to 25 more. Also, when you create something creative, whether it's successful or not, you don't change your vision. It may not lead to money, but your vision and thoughts remain, and they're sure to reach someone. I was glad that the younger audience members resonated with that.

Ron: We're musicians, after all, and we have no intention of preaching life lessons. We just did what we had to do and that's how we got to where we are today. That's all there is to it, and Edgar captured that in a film. If young audiences can take something from it, then maybe that proves our strength.

Interview and composition: Manabu Soma

KODAK SAFETY FILM 6017
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Who Exactly Are They?

Sparks Biography

Sparks (Ron Mael, Russell Mael)

Sparks was formed in Los Angeles (fanfare!) by brothers Ron Mael (born August 12, 1945) and Russell Mael (born October 5, 1948). After playing in several bands, the two formed Halfnelson in 1968. They released their first album, "Halfnelson," in 1971, but changed their name to Sparks in 1972 and released their second album, "A Woofer in Tweeter's Clothing" (1972). In 1973, they moved to the UK, where the Mael brothers' unique personalities attracted attention and their hit album, "Kimono My House" (1974), quickly became a teen idol group. After releasing three albums in the UK, Sparks became a duo consisting of Ron and Russell, and returned to the US in 1976. In 1979, Sparks released "No.1 In Heaven," which introduced synthesizers, and its innovative sound had a major impact on the rock scene. Starting with "Whomp That Sucker" (1981), they reverted to a band and based themselves in Los Angeles. Singles like "I Predict" (1982), which drew attention for its music video featuring Ron stripping, and "Cool Places" (1983), featuring Jane Wiedlin of the Go-Go's, became hits, and Sparks gained popularity among young Americans. Between 1988 and 1994, they did not release any albums, and instead worked on a film adaptation of the Japanese manga "Mai," but the project fell through. The band's first new album in six years, "Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins" (1994), featured the hit "When Do I Get to Sing 'My Way,'" and marked their comeback to the rock scene. With "Lil' Beethoven" (2002), they broke new ground by incorporating classical music in a unique way, and in 2009, they were commissioned by a Swedish radio station to create the musical "The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman," taking on one new endeavor after another. Then, in 2021, the musical film "Annette," directed by Leos Carax, was released, and Sparks' soundtrack won the Cannes Film Festival's Best Soundtrack Award and the César Award for Best Original Score. Now, after more than 50 years of activity, Sparks is reaching a new peak.

Text: Yasuro Murao

Discography

1971. Halfnelson
1972. A Woofer in Tweeter's Clothing
1974. Kimono My House
1974. Self-Expression of Love (Propaganda)
1975. Spark Show (Indiscreet)
1976. Big Beat
1977. Introducing (Introducing Sparks)
1979. No. 1 in Heaven
1980. Terminal Jive
1981. Bullying the Weak (Whomp that Sucker)
1982. Bodyguard in My Pants (Angst in My Pants)
1983. In Outer Space
1984. Pulling Rabbits Out of a Hat
1986. Music That You Can Dance To
1988. Interior Design
1994. A Feast of Sensuality (Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins)
1997. Plagiarism~The World of Copying (Plagiarism)
2000. Balls
2002. Lil' Beethoven
2006. Hello Young Lovers
2008. Exotic Creatures of the Deep
2009. The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman
2013. Two Hands, One Mouth: Live in Europe
2015. FFS
2017. Hippopotamus
2020. A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip
2021. [Annette] Original Soundtrack

The Music of Sparks Continues to Change Without Stopping

Yasuro Murao (Movie/Music Writer)

Sparks created styles, then destroyed them, then created new ones. Repeating this process became their style. Their first style was Sparks-style glam rock. On their early masterpiece, "Kimono My House" (1974), Russell's falsetto voice danced gracefully over a flashy guitar sound. At the time, it was unusual for a rock band to sing in falsetto. While the result was a song written by Ron, it became one of Sparks' defining characteristics. Yet, amidst all this, an intelligent pop sensibility permeates the album, making it a beloved classic for Morrissey and Björk. The following album, "Propaganda" (1974), saw the songs' complexity escalate, with dizzying changes in tempo and tone throughout the song. The dramatic developments felt like a roller coaster ride. "Indiscreet" (1975) marked their early departure from glam rock. Incorporating elements of jazz and classical music, each song takes on a completely different style, combining playfulness and experimental spirit in a truly Sparks style.
Sparks then sought a new style. They headed to New York, where the punk storm was raging, and produced "Big Beat" (1976), which Thurston Moore described as "Sparks-style punk." Their follow-up, "Introducing Sparks" (1977), saw them working in LA with accomplished session musicians like David Foster and Lee Ritenour to create a Sparks-style West Coast sound, traveling across the US to scout the scene. Then, drawn by their interest in disco, the duo returned to Europe and teamed up with up-and-coming producer Giorgio Moroder to release "No. 1 in Heaven" (1979), incorporating synthesizers and dance beats. This album, which created a style known as Sparks-style techno-pop, had a profound impact on younger artists such as New Order and Depeche Mode.
In the 1980s, young people began to feel that "rock is old!" and sought a new sound, giving rise to the New Wave scene. Sparks, along with David Bowie, were one of the few predecessors to influence them. This was likely because Sparks' inherent pursuit of new styles and cynical humor were characteristic of New Wave. In the 1980s, they established their own version of New Wave by fusing synths with band sounds. Their signature work from this period was "In Outer Space" (1983), and the single "Cool Places," a duet between Jane Wiedlin of the wildly popular female rock band The Go-Go's and Russell, became a smash hit. Jane was such an avid Sparks fan that she organized a fan club.
In the '90s, Sparks continued to experiment in their own studio. A major turning point for them was "Lil' Beethoven" (2002). Sparks had lost interest in the electronic pop sound they'd taken up since their comeback album, "Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins" (1994), and so for this album they abandoned the danceable beats. Instead, they overdubbed synth strings and Russell's voice, layering short phrases in a mosaic to create an orchestral sound. This innovative approach,

which blended classical and techno, marked Sparks' breakthrough in the 2000s.
Then, in the 2010s, Sparks, who discovered new possibilities in their band sound with their 2015 collaboration with Franz Ferdinand, released "Hippopotamus" (2017), a full-on pop album for the first time in a long while. Packed with all the styles they'd pioneered up until then, this album seems to be based on the concept of the band Sparks, and in the UK it reached the top 10 (peaking at #7) for the first time in 43 years (!) since "Propaganda." This "best of both worlds" approach continues in their latest album, A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip (2020), which reached number one on the UK indie charts.
Meanwhile, their first attempt at a soundtrack, and a long-held dream of theirs, was the musical film Annette (2021), which also received high praise, making Sparks invincible. As Russell says in the film, even if medical advances mean they make 300 albums in the future, their sound will surely continue to evolve.

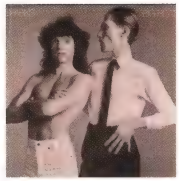
1. Halfnelson

2. A Woofer in Tweeter's Clothing

3. Kimono My House

4. Self-Expression of Love (Propaganda)

5. Spark Show (Indiscreet)



6. Big Beat

7. Introducing (Introducing Sparks)

8. No. 1 in Heaven
(OTLCD7548·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

9. Terminal Jive

10. Bullying the Weak (Whomp That Sucker)
(OTLCD7552·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

11. Angst in My Pants
(OTLCD7546·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

12. In Outer Space·
(OTLCD7547·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

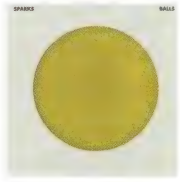
13. Pulling Rabbits Out of a Hat
(OTLCD7549·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

14. Music That You Can Dance To
(OTLCD7551·SOLID/REPERTOIRE)

15. Interior Design

16. A Feast of Sensuality (Gratuitous Sax & Senseless Violins)

17. Plagiarism ~ The World of Copying (Plagiarism)



18. Balls

19.Lil' Beethoven

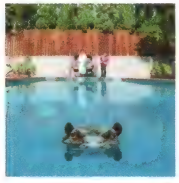
20. Hello Young Lovers

21. Exotic Creatures of the Deep

22.The Seduction of Ingmar Bergman

23.FFS

24.Two Hands, One Mouth: Live in Europe



25. Hippopotamus

26.A Steady Drip, Drip, Drip

27."Annette" Original Soundtrack

Sparks Lovers

Madoka Yamazaki (Columnist)

“Sparks Brothers” is a gathering of Sparks fans and musicians influenced by them, dedicated to brothers Ron and Russell Mael. However, upon closer inspection, you'll also spot some people who aren't involved in the music industry. A particular mystery to music fans is the presence of Amy Sherman-Palladino and Danny Palladino. This couple, who have long been Sparks fans, are known as the creators of the hit TV shows "Gilmore Girls" (2000-2007) and "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" (2017-present). They're also known for their exquisitely tuneful selections that appeal to enthusiasts, and naturally, Sparks songs are featured on "Gilmore Girls." Though they seem like an unlikely fit for this intimate drama set in the small town of Stars Hollow, Connecticut, the Palladinos even made a guest appearance in the Season 6 finale of "Gilmore," the last show they directed and wrote. In the episode, a group of street musicians converge on Stars Hollow (the fictional town where the show is set), Sparks joins forces with Yo La Tengo and the family band of Thurston Moore, Kim Gordon, and their daughter Coco to perform a street version of their then-new song, "Perfume." It's a rare episode where we get to see the pair acting. Watching the Palladinos' drama, it's clear that they weren't just fans of Sparks' music, but were also influenced by their quirky sense of humor. The true value of a band like Sparks will only be realized after time has passed and musicians emerge who respect them and create sounds influenced by them, but Sparks' influence goes beyond the boundaries of music. There's a phrase that music professionals like: musician's musician, but they were also comedians' musicians. Proof of this is the large number of comedians who appear in "The Sparks Brothers.” They all have a twisted sense of humor and are not easy to understand. Fred Armisen is also a punk drummer. Patton Oswalt is a diminutive musician known for his insight into subcultures such as film, music, and food, and his jokes based on them. April Richardson is a music nerd known for incorporating a 90s alternative sensibility into her stand-up. At times, they even make jokes about things they like, but the way they maintain a distance when doing so shows the influence of Sparks' music. This selection is cool, but also suggests the intention of Edgar Wright, who, though not a musician, was greatly influenced by them. Sparks' sense of humor, which made it hard to tell whether they were funny or not, and how serious they were, sometimes hindered their recognition as serious musicians. This is one of the reasons why they have been treated as a fringe band, not belonging to any particular era or style in rock history. However, their hybrid sense of humor, combined with their music, has ultimately created a major trend, spreading to a wide range of fields. There's no doubt that younger generations who watch this documentary will be deeply impressed by the brothers' determination to devote their lives to being "Sparks." It's not just musicians who are born from this small group of people with such a twisted sense. Before we knew it, "Sparks-esque" things were everywhere in culture. Their current reputation is the result, and this documentary, which serves as both an introduction and a definitive guide to Sparks, may have a lasting, lasting impact.

Sparks: A Quest For Artistic Bliss

Manabu Soma (Writer)

Sparks' Japan tour, held at Club Quattro in Tokyo on August 20, 2018, was amazing. It was euphoric, perhaps even blissful. I'm sure there are better words to describe it, but finding one is just as difficult as describing Sparks' appeal. This is what the film “The Sparks Brothers” offers. Sparks had more than just one quirk, but director Edgar Wright narrates each and every one of their quirks with love, humor, and enthusiasm.

I burst out laughing right from the opening, when Russell sings, "Fanfare! A fanfare to start the movie!" Sparks wrote this little song, "Fanfare," for this film. It's clear from the lyrics in the film and the album cover artwork that this kind of silly sense of humor is one of Sparks' charms. In this regard, a comment by Flea of the Red Hot Chili Peppers is interesting: "What bothers me about pop music is the lack of acceptance for humor. That's why Sparks will never be big. They're too funny." Perhaps this accurately describes Sparks' place in rock history.

Wright also carefully examines the evolution of Sparks' musical style. Sparks' music, which began with what some call "weird" pop music, has since shifted to glam rock, classical, and what Thurston Moore calls "new punk" in the film. A significant amount of time is devoted to the synthesizer-focused episode that led to the founding of electropop, likely due to the fact that it was the first Sparks song Wright ever heard. Above all, the film conveys the appeal of Sparks in their unwavering commitment to creativity, even as their musical style has changed. Sparks has yet to become a pop star on the same level as the Rolling Stones or Michael Jackson. In terms of sales, as stated in the film, they are "an artist who has been 'finished' countless times." As a cinephile, he also tried his hand at film music, but failed twice. However, these are just the phenomena of being a "big hit." In the film, Russell says, "I may not have sold two trillion records, but I think the measure of success is staying true to your vision and being consistent over time." Here we see an artist who isn't afraid to take risks, whether it's with humor or a change in musical style. In that sense, Sparks is more of an artist than a pop star, and even more of a seeker. That is exactly the theme of "The Sparks Brothers." Despite their strange image, they are constantly moving forward. Which is why it can be said with confidence that right now is the peak of their career.

Let's return to their 2018 Japan tour. Director Wright accompanied them on the tour, capturing footage of their visit on camera. The film includes glimpses of the concert, along with footage of their off-stage performances. Wright's own footage clearly captures the stage and the ecstatic audience on the dance floor. They played "No. 1 Song in Heaven" again that day, and the Tokyo audience truly seemed to experience a "heavenly hit." It's not far-fetched to say that Sparks, as seekers of truth, found their way to paradise there. The film also explores their journey through the COVID-19 pandemic and introduces the realization of their collaboration with director Leos Carax on the film "Annette." Their determination to keep moving forward even in the face of a pandemic is evident. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to interview the Mael brothers in conjunction with the release of this film, and they cheerfully told me that they would definitely visit Japan again once the COVID-19 pandemic is over. Hoping that those blissful times will return, I too will take this opportunity to reflect on whether I am moving forward.

ARK

The 21st Century is the Era of Sparks

Text: Yuichi Kishino (Studyist)

No matter what era or song you listen to, Sparks' songs are unmistakable pop songs, without the slightest hint of incomprehensibility. However, Sparks is said to be a mysterious band. Why is that? One reason is the diversity of their musical style. If you try to categorize Sparks in terms of musical genre, they change constantly with the times, and there is no consistency. This makes it difficult to get a good impression of the band.
Sometimes they play typical American pop, sometimes they play glittering glam rock, sometimes they play hard-driving punk rock, and sometimes they play techno pop that you can dance to at a disco. Sparks exists without being limited by the tastes of these genres. In a way, this has also been an obstacle to gaining new fans.
For the most part, music fans tend to favor specific genres. Rock fans don't dance to techno, and punk fans don't appreciate complex, operatic musical developments. If a fan of a certain genre hears Sparks and discovers their sound isn't to their taste, they might think, "Oh, that's the kind of sound. Not my thing," and never listen again. This has also been a source of confusion for longtime fans.
Sparks continues to betray its fans in a good way. Each time, fans are left feeling confused, thinking, "Oh, the Sparks I love has changed." Ron and Russell Mael have stated in interviews that "with each album, we try to do something new, hopefully redefining what Sparks is," and that "we're always trying to do something musically challenging." They also note, "Some things have changed, like the band members, and recording technology."
Sparks is a band consisting of brothers Ron (keyboards and songwriting) and Russell (vocals). While the musicians changed over the years, they can essentially be considered a band of brothers. The film also depicts the close relationship they share in their everyday lives. A common band story is that, since they were classmates at school, they instantly knew what each other wanted to do, but Sparks was anything but. Having known each other since birth, they shared a common understanding of what they truly wanted to do, and this gave them the advantage of being able to freely change their musical style. However, this strength was a drawback in the last century. For example, record stores had trouble figuring out where to place their records.
However, with the start of the 21st century, changes began to occur in the way their music was appreciated and the demand for it. In an environment where music is listened to online rather than in stores, the section in which it's placed doesn't matter. As the barriers of genre were torn down and young listeners emerged, they began to perceive music they'd never heard before in the same way as new releases. It seems that a new axis of appreciation was born, one that values the freshness of the music itself rather than differences in musical genre. Their wide-ranging musicality sometimes led to misunderstandings, but it could also be said that their cross-genre reach actually brought their true essence to light. Perhaps this 50-year detour was necessary to gain true recognition.

Despite this, Sparks' music continues to be rediscovered and attract new listeners. Last year, the momentum for re-evaluation surged with the production of this documentary, the release of the musical film "Annette," directed by Leos Carax and for which Sparks wrote the original story and music, and the film's awards for Best Director and Best Music (Soundtrack) at the Cannes Film Festival. Many musicians have spoken of their respect for Sparks in interviews. Many fans likely began listening to their music for the first time as a result of these experiences. This film is a culmination of the words of famous musicians who are filled with love for Sparks. Listening to what they have to say will instantly clear up any notion of the "enigma of Sparks."

So what is the essence of Sparks' music? Ron Mael is quoted as saying, "We are believers in style. It's similar to the films of Suzuki Seijun, perhaps. It's a kind of pop sensibility. The style (form) suppresses the substance of the expression." In other words, it's similar to the anecdote about the monkey who peeled a radish to get to the flesh, only to find that no matter how far he peeled it, he never got to the flesh. The skin was the flesh (essence). This is one example of Sparks' approach.

Sparks' lyrics have a style that can be perceived as nonsense, difficult to decipher, such as relentlessly repeating familiar pop icons to try to elicit different meanings, or uttering a single word that then becomes a rapid-fire string of words that transcends meaning and narrative. Yet Sparks' lyrics are rich in expression, humorously expressing sad emotions and melancholy depicting interesting scenes. They go beyond superficial styles like kitsch, camp, and pop art, and delve into areas that include philosophical implications. Many of their works focus on the fundamental loneliness of human existence and the absurdity of relationships, demonstrating their exceptional storytelling and descriptive abilities, as well as their insight into human nature.

In this way, Sparks' distinctive feature is that they have their feet firmly planted in the real world, without leaving the sphere of their daily lives, yet, like the music of a stage play, they caricature the circumstances and state of the world around us. Listening to Sparks' music, one has the strange experience of seeing the everyday scenes of our lives as stage art. When they first appeared on a TV show, keyboardist Ron Mael's appearance and behavior, which were hardly what you'd expect from a rock musician, caused quite a stir. A strong sense of incongruity, as if they'd been brought there by mistake. But don't we too sometimes feel a strong sense of incongruity, as if we've been brought there by mistake, in the world we live in?

Like the cover of their fourth album, "Propaganda," don't you sometimes feel as if you've been kidnapped, taken away on a boat, and forced to live in this world? The way they embody this fundamental sense of alienation through a sound that's full of pop sensibility is the essence of Sparks, and perhaps the appeal that generates such great empathy.

It's like butterfly hunting. You're looking for some species that nobody has ever found before.

I thought their efforts were great and said, "Let's make a record."

What happened after that was evolution.

Todd Rundgren

In my musical life, the many musicians on my tour bus end up talking about Sparks.

Beck

What's puzzling about pop music is its lack of acceptance of humor.

That's why Sparks can't be the biggest in the world. It's too funny.

Flea/Red Hot Chili Peppers

There's a running theme in Ron's lyrics and their songs: inferiority complex.

Alex Kapranos/Franz Ferdinand

This was the first single I bought, and I played it on repeat until the groove wore off (laughs).

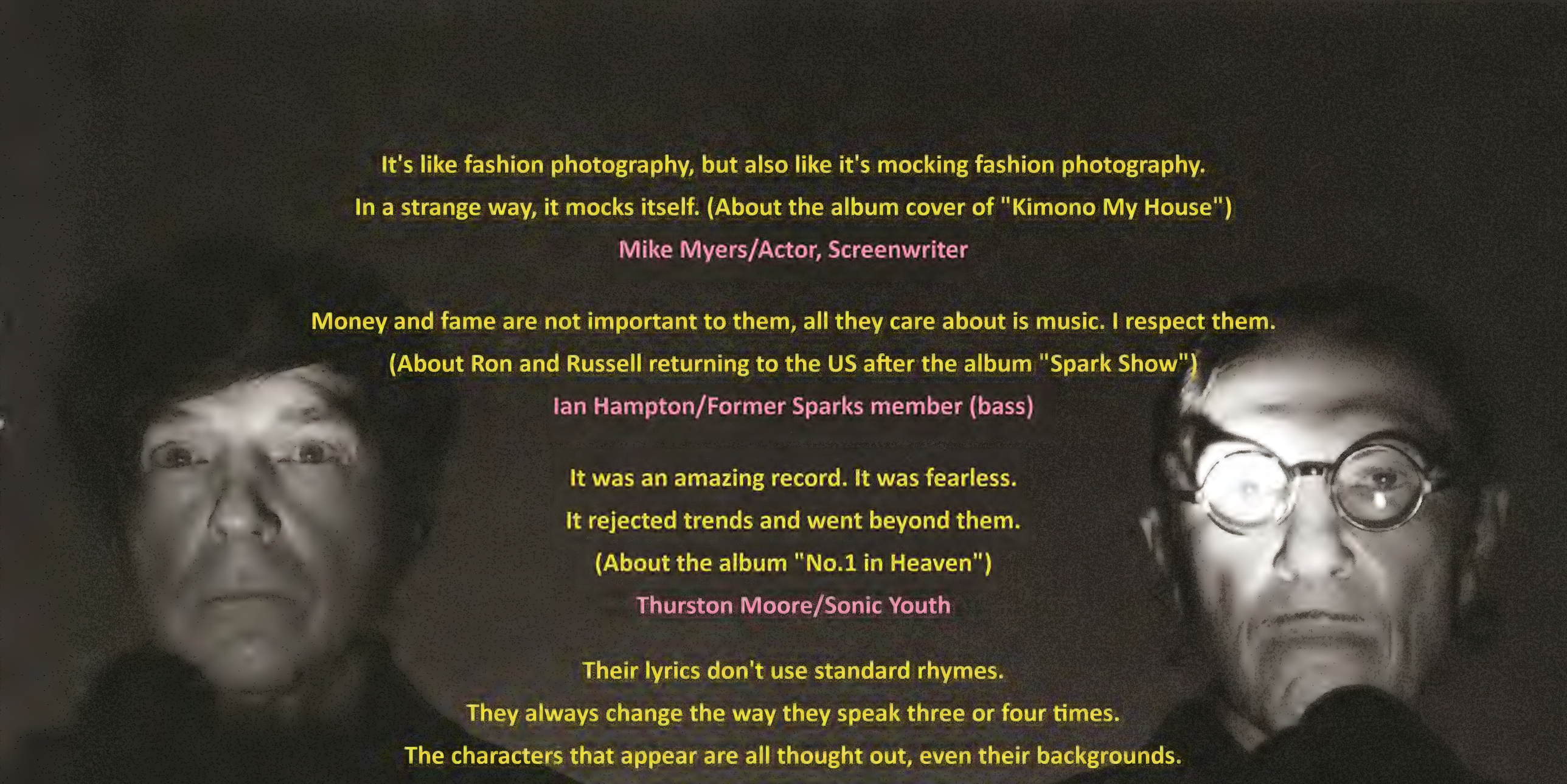
(About "This Town Ain't Big Enough for Both of Us")

Vince Clarke/Yazoo, Depeche Mode

As you read it, you realize that the man he's complaining to is cheating on his wife.

I wanted to decipher this song properly. It's not usually easy to decipher. (About "Tits")

Neil Gaiman/Author



It's like fashion photography, but also like it's mocking fashion photography.
In a strange way, it mocks itself. (About the album cover of "Kimono My House")
Mike Myers/Actor, Screenwriter

Money and fame are not important to them, all they care about is music. I respect them.
(About Ron and Russell returning to the US after the album "Spark Show")
Ian Hampton/Former Sparks member (bass)

It was an amazing record. It was fearless.
It rejected trends and went beyond them.
(About the album "No.1 in Heaven")
Thurston Moore/Sonic Youth

Their lyrics don't use standard rhymes.
They always change the way they speak three or four times.
The characters that appear are all thought out, even their backgrounds.
Each song has its own unique personality.
Patton Oswalt / Stand-up comedian, actor, author

Sparks is paving the way.
That is the ultimate ability of an artist - it has nothing to do with the real world.
Jack Antonoff/Lyricist, Composer, Producer

トッド・ラングレン
Todd Rundgren

He is a music producer and multi-instrumentalist who has worked with various artists, including XTC and Hall & Oates. He discovered Sparks during their Halfnelson days and gave them the opportunity to debut.

ベック
Beck

A leading American artist who has been active at the forefront of the music scene since the 1990s, he has won numerous Grammy Awards for his global hits such as "Odelay" and "Morning Phase."

フリー（レッド・ホット・チリ・ペッパーズ）
Flea (Red Hot Chili Peppers)

He debuted as bassist for the Red Hot Chili Peppers in 1984. The band has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and has won six Grammy Awards.

アレックス・カプラノス（フランツ・フェルディナンド）
Alex Kapranos (Franz Ferdinand)

He is the frontman of the Scottish band Franz Ferdinand. In 2015, he released a collaborative album with Sparks, titled "FFS," under the name "FFS."

For director Edgar Wright, as well as producers Nila Park and George Henken, who worked on the film, the "starting point" of making a documentary about Sparks was their performance of "This Town Ain't Big Enough for Both of Us" on BBC's "Top of the Pops" on May 9, 1974, which is also featured in the film.
"When we sent them a message, they immediately replied with a greeting." However, Wright's motivation for making this film was rather unusual. Wright, a longtime fan of Sparks, checked Sparks' Twitter account and was fortunate enough to find that the two were already following him. "I sent them a message saying, 'There are hardly any bands that manage their own Twitter accounts!' and they replied, 'We do.' The next day, I visited Russell's home in Beverly Hills, and that's where our amazing friendship began."
Later, Wright and friends went to a Sparks concert in Los Angeles. "Russell still has an incredible voice," Wright says. "Many singers who were active in the 1970s can no longer produce the same voices, probably due to drugs or alcohol. But Ron and Russell have taken a long-term view of life and have worked hard to maintain their physical and mental health. Even in their 70s, they have incredible energy, and Russell can still sing high notes. It's mind-blowing. I saw them perform in 2017. Looking down at the audience from the balcony, I saw a wide range of ages, from 16 to around 60. I said to a friend, 'The only thing Sparks need to succeed is a documentary about their life.' For anyone who wants to know about Sparks, there are so many incredible albums, and they have had multiple golden ages in different places and at different times, from the UK to the West Coast of the US to Germany. The next day, I spoke to them directly. They said, 'We've had talks about making a documentary about them before, but we've always turned them down because we didn't think they were the right people. But we think you would be perfect.'"
Wright says it was important to include as many Sparks songs and the music that influenced them as possible in the film: "With The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and Bee Gees, most people know them so you can explain their careers in a few minutes and not even introduce their songs. But with Sparks, you really have to explain them. Even their fans don't know them that well."
"We interviewed Ron and Russell for over two years," said producer Laura Richardson. "We accompanied them on their tours to London, Tokyo, Mexico, and even to their home in California, and were able to hear a variety of stories."

Sparks emerge when they are spoken of
Eighty interviews were conducted in London, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Brussels, and New York with Sparks' collaborators, associates, and fans, both famous and unknown. Wright himself conducted 79 of these interviews in person. Only Jane Wiedlin of The Go-Go's was interviewed via Skype.
"I wanted to capture the spirit of music in the

film. I didn't want it to be just another typical interview. So I asked the questions I'd always wanted to ask," Wright says. "I was able to hear from people from all walks of life, not just musicians. It was also fun to hear from Ron and Russell's friends and fans. The stories they told are the history of pop culture itself over the past 50 years."

Henken explains, "Everyone who spoke to us was happy to talk about their love for Sparks. It was clear how important and influential Ron and Russell were to so many artists. They all dedicated a lot of time to us, and interviews sometimes lasted 90 minutes, and even two hours."

Animators Joseph Wallace and Greg McLeod were brought in to bridge the gaps between sections, depict various episodes, and add spice to the film, resulting in greater depth to the narrative throughout.

"The Mael brothers have a very cinematic sensibility and a deep interest in film, so I thought animation and images that bounce around everywhere would be a perfect fit," Wright says.

"We wanted to include something in the film that was as interesting as the footage in their music videos."

Henken adds, "The previously filmed footage, animation, and interviews highlight the diversity and immense influence of what they have conveyed over more than 50 years. The fact that 'there is nothing typical of Sparks' is very typical of Sparks."

Where is Sparks headed?

Wright says, "Sparks faced many crises in their career, but they got through them not on luck but on talent.

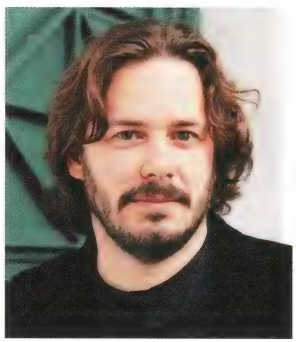
People like Todd Rundgren, Island Records, and Giorgio Moroder believed in them and offered a helping hand at various times. Sometimes, when they thought they were about to give up, they were rescued by others who were touched by their tireless enthusiasm. Sparks reinvented themselves again and again, with their own hands. Their continued persistence through sheer force of will is what fascinates us."

"When you watch the film, you realize how difficult times they endured - people who didn't understand them, people who were confused by their unique creative energy leading them in directions that didn't make them money - but they had a strong belief in their work and stuck to it no matter what others thought, and I think that's far more rewarding than chasing short-term success or popularity," Henken says.

"There are a lot of artists for whom Sparks is in their DNA," says Henken. "Sparks have been around for so long that it feels like there's something unfathomable about them, but in reality, they're incredibly sincere about what they do," says Wright. "That kind of consistency over 50 years is really inspiring. Ron and Russell have been in a band that I know of that's been around for the long haul like no other band has. It's like the tortoise and the hare story, it took them 50 years to achieve their success."

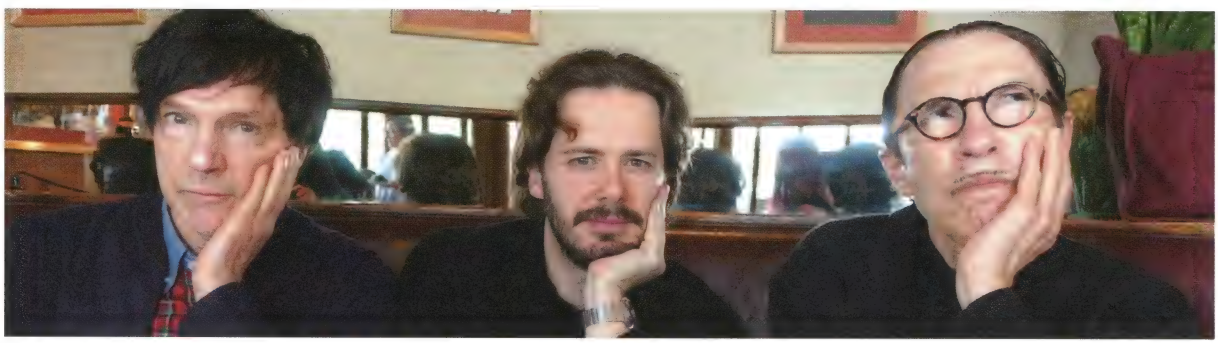
Director Edgar Wright Explains: Who is Sparks?

I remember seeing Sparks sing "No. 1 Song in Heaven" in 1979. Later, my parents bought me a compilation album that had "Beat the Clock" on it, and when I was a teenager and bought a glam rock compilation, Sparks was on it again. But their songs were completely different from what they'd done up until then. When I saw them sing "When Do I Get to Sing 'My Way'?" in the mid-'90s, I couldn't believe it was the same band. Sparks was an enigma.
I think the mystery to many is that they grew up in California, because they look like German or British bands. Their legacy is certainly being carried on. Jack Antonoff said that when he first heard Sparks, he thought, "They sound like Depeche Mode," and later realized, "No, Depeche Mode sounds like Sparks." The same can be said for many other bands.
Why are they always able to stay fresh and challenging? It's true that Sparks' uncompromising attitude has prevented them from achieving mainstream success. However, I think that unwavering belief is what makes them who they are. Nearly 50 years after the release of their first album, Sparks is still a band that people continue to discover.



エドガー・ライト(監督・製作)
Edgar Wright (Director / Producer)

Born April 18, 1974, in Dorset, England. He gained attention for directing the TV series "Spaced" (1999-2001). Since then, he has collaborated with Simon Pegg, Nick Frost, and producer Nira Park, directing the "Three Flavors Cornet" trilogy: "Shaun of the Dead" (2004), "Hot Fuzz" (2007), and "The World's End" (2013). His other directorial works include "Scott Pilgrim vs. the Evil Ex-Boyfriends" (2010), "Baby Driver" (2017), and "Last Night in Soho" (2021). He wrote the screenplay for “The Adventures of Tintin: The Secret of the Unicorn” (2011) and produced “Attack the Block” (2011) and “Sightseers: A Killer's Guide to Britain” (2012). In 2018, he founded Complete Fiction Pictures with Nira Park, Joe Cornish and others.



ニラ・パーク（製作）
Nira Park (Producer)

She has produced all of Edgar Wright's films since "Spaced" (1999-2001) up to "Last Night in Soho" (2021). She has also produced Joe Cornish's films such as "Attack the Block" (2011) and "Quest of the King: The Wizard and the Four Knights" (2019), "Paul" (2011), "New Wrong Turn: Dead Fever" (2013), "Come Back!" (2014), and "Rebecca" (2020).

ジョージ・ヘンケン（製作）
George Hencken (Producer)

He started his career in the television industry, gaining experience in music video and commercial production. After a temporary leave from the field, he returned to work on Mike Figgis' short film "The 4 Dreams of Miss X" (2007). He has also worked on Julian Temple's films, including "Dr. Feelgood - Oil City Confidential" (2009) and the television movie "Keith Richards: The Origin of the Species" (2016).

ローラ・リチャードソン（製作）
Laura Richardson (Producer)

Originally from Melbourne, Australia, she moved to London and began her career in the Paramount Pictures feature film "Killing Bono" (2011). He has also worked as a producer alongside Nira Park on films such as "Baby Driver" (2017), "Quest of the King: The Wizard and the Four Knights" (2019), "Rebecca" (2020), and "Last Night in Soho" (2021).

ジェイク・ポロンスキー（撮影監督）
Jake Polonsky (Director of Photography)

He worked as a cinematographer on "Doctor Who" (2005-) and "Pennyworth" (2019-). He also worked as a cinematographer on over 27 episodes of "Billions" (2016-), and directed one episode. He also worked as a second unit cinematographer on "The World's End" (2013).

ポール・トレワーサ（編集）
Paul Trewartha (Editor)

His major works include "Ferrari: Immortal Glory" (2017), the documentary "Ronnie's" (2020) about legendary saxophonist Ronnie Scott, and "Kipchoge: The Last Milestone" (21221), a documentary about marathon runner Eliud Kipchoge produced by Ridley Scott and Kevin Macdonald and directed by Jake Scott.

CAST

Ron Mael	ロン・メイル
Russell Mael	ラッセル・メイル
Beck / Gary Stewart / Mike Berns / Jane Wiedlin	ベック　ゲイリー・スチュワート　マイク・バーンズ　ジェーン・ウィードリン
Sal Maida / Christi Haydon / Dean Menta / Harley Feinstein	サル・メイダ　クリスティ・ハイドン　ディーン・メンタ　ハーリー・ファインスタイン
Tony Visconti / Mike Myers / Fred Armisen / Tammy Glover	トニー・ヴィスコンティ　マイク・マイヤーズ　フレッド・アーミセン　タミー・グローヴァー
John Hewlett / Giorgio Moroder / 'Weird Al' Yankovic	ジョン・ヒューレット　ジョルジオ・モロダー　ウィアード・アル・ヤンコビック
Muff Winwood / Nick Rhodes / John Taylor / Todd Rundgren / Flea	マフ・ウィンウッド　ニック・ローズ　ジョン・テイラー　トッド・ラングレン　フリー
Hilly Michaels / Jason Schwartzman / Jonathan Ross	ヒリー・マイケルズ　ジェイソン・シュワルツマン　ジョナサン・ロス
Amy Sherman-Palladino / Dan Palladino / Mark Crowther	エイミー・シャーマン＝パラディーノ　ダン・パラディーノ　マーク・クラウザー
Vera Hegarty / Neil Gaiman / Stephen Morris / Gillian Gilbert	ヴェラ・ヘガーティ　ニール・ゲイマン　スティーヴン・モリス　ジリアン・ギルバート
Katie Puckrik / Patton Oswalt / Steve Jones	ケイティ・パックリック　パットン・オズワルト　スティーヴ・ジョーンズ
James Lowe / Bernard Butler / Scott Aukerman	ジェイムズ・ロウ　バーナード・バトラー　スコット・オーカーマン
David Kendrick / Stevie Nistor / Chris Difford	デヴィッド・ケンドリック　スティーヴィー・ニスター　クリス・ディフォード
Martyn Ware / Alex Kapranos / Paul Morley / Julia Marcus	マーティン・ウェア　アレックス・カプラノス　ポール・モーリー　ジュリア・マーカス
Pamera Des Barres / Roddy Bottum / Les Bohem / April Richardson	パメラ・デ・バレス　ロディ・ボッタム　レス・ボーム　エイプリル・リチャードソン
Lance Rock / Jack Antonoff / John Congleton / Earle Mankey	ランス・ロック　ジャック・アントノフ　ジョン・コングルトン　アール・マンキー
Larry Dupont / Patricia Lowe / Vince Clarke / Andy Bell	ラリー・デュポン　パトリシア・ロウ　ヴィンス・クラーク　アンディ・ベル
Björk / Mark Gatiss / Richard Coble / Nick Heyward	ビョーク　マーク・ゲイティス　リチャード・コブル　ニック・ヘイワード
Ian Hampton / Thurston Moore / Peter Knego	イアン・ハンプトン　サーストン・ムーア　ピーター・クネゴ
Mcihael Silverblatt / Adam Buxton / Tosh Berman	マイケル・シルヴァーブラット　アダム・バクストン　トッシュ・バーマン
Edgar Wright / Rusty Egan / David Weigel	エドガー・ライト　ラスティ・イーガン　デヴィッド・ウィーゲル
Jake Fogelnest / Madeline Bocchiaro / Sue Harris / Ben House	ジェイク・フォーグルネスト　マデリン・ボッキャーロ　スー・ハリス　ベン・ハウス
Evan Weiss / Alex Casnoff / Patrick Kelly / Eli Pearl	エヴァン・ワイス　アレックス・キャスノフ　パトリック・ケリー　イーライ・パール
Simon Pegg (Voice of John Lennon) / Nick Frost (Voice of Ringo Starr)	サイモン・ペッグ（ジョン・レノンの声）　ニック・フロスト（リンゴ・スターの声）

CREW

Directed by	監督
Edgar Wright	エドガー・ライト
Produced by	製作
Nira Park	ニラ・パーク
Edgar Wright	エドガー・ライト
George Hencken	ジョージ・ヘンケン
Laura Richardson	ローラ・リチャードソン
Editor	編集
Paul Trewartha	ポール・トレワーサ
Archive Producer	アーカイブ・プロデューサー
Kate Griffiths	ケイト・グリフィス
Director of Photography	撮影監督
Jake Polonsky	ジェイク・ポロンスキー
Music Supervisor	ミュージック・スーパーバイザー
Gary Welch	ゲイリー・ウェルチ
Line Producer	ライン・プロデューサー
Serena Kennedy	セリーナ・ケネディ

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